

Message Text

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SUBJECT: KOREAN PRODUCT STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

REF: A. SEOUL 6280

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SUMMARY: SUPPLEMENTARY INQUIRIES INTO STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES REVEAL SAME PATTERN AS OUTLINED REF A., I.E., HEAVY BORROWING FROM FOREIGN STANDARDS AND LITTLE DIFFICULTY FOR IMPORTS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTS REF. A DF RESPONSE TO REF B AND COVERS STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES OF BUREAU OF QUALITY CONTROL (BQC) AND BUREAU OF INSPECTION (BI) OF THE INDUSTRIAL ADVANCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (IAA) (SEE PARA 9, REF A). PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIVITIES BOTH THESE BUREAUS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF OTHER STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED REF B, CONFIRMING EMBASSY'S GENERAL CONCLUSIONS CITED PARA 12, REF A.
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2. BQC'S PRINCIPAL ROLE IN STANDARDS SYSTEM CONCERNS ADMINISTRATION OF EXPORT INSPECTION LAW AND QUALITY CONTROL LAW (FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION). BQC CURRENTLY MAINTAINS QUALITY CONTROLS STANDARDS FOR APPROXIMATELY 200 EXPORT

PRODUCTS. INSPECTIONS ARE CONDUCTED BY NINE PRIVATE INSPECTION FACILITIES ORGANIZED ALONG INDUSTRY LINES, E.G. KOREA TEXTILE INSPECTION AND TESTING INSTITUTE, AND SEVEN GOVERNMENT FACILITIES. LATTER INCLUDE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL STANDARDS RESEARCH INSTITUTE (NISRI-SEE PARA 8, REF B) AND SIX PROVINCIAL TESTING FACILITIES. PRIVATE FACILITIES ARE SELF-SUPPORTING ON FEES COLLECTED BUT ARE FULLY RESPONSIVE TO IAA DIRECTION. STANDARDS ARE NORMALLY DRAFTED BY THESE PRIVATE INSTITUTES IN RESPONSE TO REQUIREMENTS INDUSTRIES DEEM NECESSARY TO MARKET ABROAD. DRAFTS REFERRED THROUGH BQC TO COMMITTEES SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH REVIEW INDUSTRIAL STANDARDS, DESCRIBED PARA 5, REF A. DRAFTS ARE SUBJECT FINAL APPROVAL OF IAA.

3. BQC ALSO MAINTAINS QUALITY CONTROL STANDARDS FOR 111 PRODUCTS FOR DOMESTIC MARKETING. PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPING THESE STANDARDS VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL TO THOSE FOR INDUSTRIAL STANDARDS. ACCORDING BQC SOURCE, STANDARDS ARE LARGELY BASED ON JAPANESE QUALITY CONTROL STANDARDS. THEY ARE LESS RIGOROUS THAN KOREA STANDARDS DEVELOPED BY BUREAU OF STANDARDS AND ARE INTENDED TO SET OUT MINIMUM QUALITY CONTROL REQUIREMENTS AIMED PRINCIPALLY AT CONSUMER PROTECTION. HOWEVER, FOR ALL BUT 7 PRODUCTS, ENFORCEMENT IS LIMITED TO SPOT CHECKS IN MARKET BY BQC PERSONNEL. INSPECTIONS CONDUCTED AT PRODUCTION SITE FOR SEVEN REFINED PETROLEUM PRODUCTS BY KOREA OIL INSPECTION FOUNDATION, A PRIVATE FACILITY DESIGNATED BY BQC. WHILE IN THEORY THESE STANDARDS APPLY TO IMPORTS, THERE ARE FEW, IF ANY, IMPORTS OF THESE PRODUCTS, AND IMPORTS ARE NOT, IN ANY EVENT, SUBJECTED TO TESTING. BQC ALSO DEVELOPS SOME STANDARDS FOR ENFORCEMENT OF LAW FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION.

4. BI MAINTAINS SAFETY STANDARDS FOR ABOUT 800-900 ITEMS IN CONNECTION SAFETY OF ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES LAW. PROCEDURES USED IN DEVELOPING STANDARDS VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE FOR INDUSTRIAL STANDARDS, BUT SAFETY STANDARDS PUBLISHED SEPARATELY. BI DRAWS HEAVILY ON FOREIGN STANDARDS AND ATTEMPTS TO CONFORM TO INTERNATIONALLY RECOMMENDED STANDARDS, E.G. IEC UNCLASSIFIED

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STANDARDS. COMPLIANCE WITH SAFETY STANDARDS IS MANDATORY AND TESTING CONDUCTED BY NISRI AND FINE INSTRUMENTS CENTER (SEE PARA 8, REF A). WHILE THERE NO OFFICIAL PROVISION FOR ACCEPTING CERTIFICATION OF FOREIGN QUALITY ASSURANCE BODIES, BI DIRECTOR CONFIRMED THAT CERTIFICATIONS OF MOST SUCH BODIES IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES NORMALLY ACCEPTED WITHOUT REFERENCE TO BQC STANDARDS, INCLUDING THOSE OF U.S. UNDERWRITERS LABORATORY. TESTS CONDUCTED IN SOME CASES TO SEE THAT IMPORTED PRODUCT CONFORMS TO STANDARDS CERTIFIED IN DOCUMENTATION. HOWEVER, IMPORTS OF MOST OF THESE ITEMS ARE MINIMAL DUE TO IMPORT RESTRICTIONS. SAFETY STANDARDS FOR TOYS AND A FEW OTHER PRODUCTS ARE DEVELOPED BY BI FOR PURPOSES OF EXPORTS AND DO NOT APPLY TO DOMESTIC MARKETING. ERICSON

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